

TESP 184: Jesus Across Cultures
Fall 2015 MW 4:45pm-6:30 pm

Thao Nguyen, S.J
Office: Kenna 300F
Phone: X2390
Email: T2nguyen@scu.edu
Office Hours: Wed 11am-12pm; Friday 9am -12pm

The course is an exploration and study of selected significant interpretations and images of Jesus of Nazareth in different historical and cultural contexts. Samples of various key historical moments from biblical to contemporary times as well as the variety of interpretations of Jesus in various global contexts will be discussed. The course will explore the interpretations of Jesus from different perspectives: biblical interpretations, American Interpretations, Asian interpretations, African interpretations, Latin American interpretations, Native American interpretations, and feminist interpretations of Jesus.

CORE CURRICULUM LEARNING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

This course fulfills Santa Clara's Core Requirement Religion, Theology, and Culture 3 Core Learning Goals: Knowledge of Global Cultures and Habits of Mind and Heart, Complexity, Critical Thinking, and Religious Reflection.

Core Goals

1. Identify diverse perspectives and evaluate ethical positions on contemporary questions.
2. Evaluate and apply insights from the study of religion to open-ended questions facing contemporary society.

Course Learning Objectives

- 1) Gain a basic understanding of the historical Jesus as well as how the Church across cultures offered symbolic theological interpretations of Jesus.
- 2) Be able to articulate the developments of Christologies as well as present the various Christologies in different historical and cultural contexts.
- 3) Demonstrate the impact of history and cultures that shaped religious ideas, particularly Christian theology.

Class Texts

- 1) Stephen Prothero, *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004.
- 2) Martin E. Brinkman, *The Non-Western Jesus: Jesus as Bodhisattva, Avatara, Guru, Prophet, Ancestor or Healer?* Equinox, 2007.
- 3) Kelly Brown Douglas, *The Black Christ*, HarperOne, 1993.
- 4) Supplemental handouts will be posted on Camino.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and participation (10%)

Active participation in class discussions is a requirement of this class. Students will be required to prepare in advance reflections on course readings, discuss them in small groups, and present the keys points of their discussions to the class. Each class day, students are required to write one or two paragraphs and two thoughtful questions on the assigned readings for class discussions.

There will be two midterm examinations, worth 30% each. These exams will evaluate student understanding of the historical Jesus as well as new interpretations of Jesus in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and America. These recollections serve as theological and ethical foundations to respond to various religio-cultural and social-political contexts (*assessing course goal #1*).

Reflection papers (20%)

Students will write four reflection papers during the quarter. Reflection papers aim to evaluate student understanding of diverse interpretations of Jesus from various cultural perspectives. These understandings provide new theological and ethical insights to respond to various cultural groups of people in the Church as well as to be open for dialogue with other religious traditions (*assessing course goal #1 and #2*).

Presentations (10%)

The presentations aim to apply insights from the study of religion, especially from different cultural perspectives of Jesus, to open-ended questions facing contemporary society such as inter-religious dialogue, the liberation of the poor, and ethical concerns in a global context (*assessing course goal #1 and #2*).

Disability Accommodations:

To receive academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Recourses located in Benson 216. Students must register with Disabilities Resources and provide documentation of a disability to Disabilities Resources prior to receiving academic accommodations.

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism or academic dishonesty in any form (as described in the Student Conduct Code) will result in a failed grade for the project, and possibly for the course. All allegations of academic dishonesty will be reported to the department chair and Office of Student Life. For a full presentation of University policies concerning plagiarism, see: <http://www.scu.edu/studentlife/resources/academicintegrity/>

Grading Scale

Grading Scale:

94-100 A	87-89.9 B+	77-79.9C+	67-69.9D+
90-93.9 A-	83-86.9 B	73-76.9C	63-66.9D
	80-82.9B-	70-72.9C-	60-62.9D-

Syllabus

Week 1: Historical Jesus and Christ of Faith.

Sept 21

Introduction to the course and its requirements.

An Overview of Various Interpretations of Jesus in Different Cultures; group activities: getting familiar with some theological and religious concepts. To prepare for next class, each group will be assigned to read one gospel and discover how each gospel presents Jesus. What are the titles, symbols, and theological presentations of Jesus?

Sept 23

In this class, we will explore how Jesus is presented in the four gospels: Mathew, Mark, Luke, John, and the Gospel of St. Thomas. We will also discuss the differences between historical Jesus and Christ of faith (handouts).

Study questions: what are the similarities and differences between the gospels in presenting Jesus? Why different? How did the early church understand Jesus?

Video Clips: *The Face: Jesus in Arts*

Week 2: Jesus in the Chinese and Buddhist Contexts

This week, we will explore new interpretations of Jesus in the Asian Contexts: Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Indonesian. We will watch a short film "Jesus and Buddha" to see how Asian Buddhists perceive Jesus. We will also study how Jesus has been interpreted by Hindu and Buddhist scholars as well as Indian Christian theologians.

Sept 28

Martin E. Brinkman, *The Non-Western Jesus*, chapter 3&5

Study Questions: what are the sources of Asian theology? How would these sources help Asian Christians understand better God's intervention in the world? How did early Chinese Christians present Jesus? What are different forms of Christianity that have existed throughout Chinese history?

Video Clips: "Jesus and Confucius"

(First reflection paper due)

Sept 30

Jesus in the Buddhist Context

Martin E. Brinkman, *The Non-Western Jesus*, chapter 6

Study questions: what are the similarities between Buddhist and Christian teachings in terms of values, spirituality, and ethics. In doing comparative theology, what form(s) of Buddhist tradition has been studied? Why? How would the teachings of the Buddha's three dimensions of existence be compared to Jesus? What are the spiritual and religious values that can be found in the Buddhist and Jesus' traditions?

Week 3 Jesus in Japanese and Korean Contexts

Oct 5

Martin E. Brinkman, *The Non-Western Jesus*, chapter 7 & 8 (Japanese and Korean Jesus)

Study questions: What is Minjung theology and its historical development? Who can be identified with Minjung in your own social context? How do Japanese and Korean interpret Jesus? What cultural and religious contexts in which Jesus is interpreted? What is "yin-yang" theology? (*Second reflection paper due*)

Oct 7

Martin E. Brinkman, *The Non-Western Jesus*, 10 & 11 (Indian Jesus)

Study questions: what are Hindu theological concepts that can be found in Christianity? How would Hindu concepts such as Trinity, Incarnation, and salvation resonate with Christian doctrines?

Week 4 Jesus in the Indonesian (Muslim) Context

Oct 12

Martin E. Brinkman, *The Non-Western Jesus*, chapter 12 & 13 (Indonesian Jesus)

Study Questions: What are religious and political contexts of Indonesia? What are Indonesian images of Jesus? How do Indonesian Christians engage in dialogue with Muslim? What is "Piring Natar"? How do Moluccans employ the so-called "*pela*" to respond to conflicts? What are the similarities between Moluccan rituals of *pela* and Christian celebrations of the Eucharist?

Oct 14

Martin E. Brinkman, *The Non-Western Jesus*, chapter 14 (Other Indonesian images of Jesus); (*Review for midterm exam*)

Week 5

Oct 19 **Midterm Exam**

Oct 21

Movie: *Son of Man*; Class Discussion

Week 6 Coloring Jesus: The Black Christ

Oct 26

Martin E. Brinkman, *The Non-Western Jesus*, chapter 15 & 16 (The African Jesus)

What are the characteristics of African theology? What are the different African interpretations of the cross? What are images of Jesus commonly presented by African theologians? Why are theological interpretations of these images?

Oct 28

Douglas, *The Black Christ*, chapter 1 & 2 (The Roots of The Black Christ)

Video Clips: *Jesus was Black*

(From now on, study questions will be posted on Camino)

Week 7 The Black Christ (Cont.)

Nov 2

Douglas, chapter 3&4 (The Theological Development of The Black Christ)
(Third reflection paper due)

Nov 4

Douglas, chapter 5 (A Womanist Approach to The Black Christ)

Week 8 Latin American Jesus

Nov 9

Film: *Romero* (class discussion)

Nov 11

John Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*, chapter 11 &12

Week 9 American Jesus

Nov 16

Prothero, *American Jesus*, chapter 4 (Jesus Superstar)

Movie: *Jesus Superstar*

(Fourth reflection paper due)

Nov 18

Prothero, *American Jesus*, chapter 1 &2 (Enlightened Sage & Sweet Savior)

Week 10

Nov 23- Nov 29

Thanksgiving

Week 11

Nov 30

Prothero, *American Jesus*, chapter 3 (Manly Redeemer)

Presentation 1

Dec 2

Prothero, *American Jesus*, chapter 5

Presentation 2

Week 12

Second Midterm Exam (TBA)